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HIBISCUS ROSA-SINENSIS PLANT NAMED 'FOREVER YOUNG'

BOTANICAL CLASSIFICATION

Hibiscus rosa-sinensis L.

VARIETAL DENOMINATION

The new plant has the varietal denomination 'FOREVER YOUNG'.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

The present invention relates to a new and distinct variety of *Hibiscus rosa-sinensis* L., which was developed in a controlled breeding program in Webster, Texas.

The genus *Hibiscus* comprises about 250 species of herbs, shrubs and trees in warm temperate and tropical regions; with leaves usually simple, mostly palmately veined, lobed or parted; flowers mostly solitary in the leaf axils but sometimes in racemes, corymbs or panicles. Hibiscus is included in the family Malvaceae, which comprises about 95 genera of herbs, shrubs and trees originating in tropical and temperate regions. *Hibiscus rosa-sinensis* is a glabrate shrub, seldom over 8 feet tall in cultivation, but treelike to 15 feet or more in tropical regions. Leaves to 6-inches long, ovate, usually serrate, mostly glossy green. Flowers solitary in upper leaf axils.

The new Hibiscus is a product of a planned breeding program conducted by the inventor in Webster, Texas. The objective of the program was to create new Hibiscus selections with improved bloom quality, color and floriferousness, plants that can be commercially produced on their own root systems, and improved plant habit with regard to vigor and postproduction longevity.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The new variety was discovered in a controlled breeding program of *Hibiscus rosa-sinensis* and differs from its parents and other known cultivars of *Hibiscus rosa-sinensis* by the following characteristics in combination:

1. Upright, compact symmetrical plant habit that is suitable for container production;

2. Healthy green foliage;

3. Vigorous growth habit;

4. Large fuchsia-pink flower with a red eye, white veining throughout, and petals that curve back along the edges;

5. Free-flowering.

Asexual reproduction of the new variety by stem cuttings, performed in Webster, Texas and Fulshear, Texas have confirmed that the distinctive characteristics of the new variety are stable and transmitted to succeeding generations, and the new variety reproduces true to type.

COMPARISON WITH PARENTS AND OTHER CULTIVARS

'Forever Young' is distinguished from its female parent 'Miss Liberty' (not patented) by having fuchsia-pink petals with white veining; flowers of 'Miss Liberty' have scarlet petals with white spots, and have white eyes. Also, 'Miss Liberty' is weak stemmed and floppy in habit, while 'Forever Young' is better branched and more upright. 'Forever Young' is distinguished from its male parent 'Jazz' (not patented) by its flower color; 'Jazz' has a flashy bloom with orange, yellow and shiny metallic hues.

Plants of 'Forever Young' can be compared to plants of the cultivar 'Erika Nicole' (not patented). However, in side-by-side comparisons conducted in Webster, Texas, plants of 'Forever Young' differ from plants of the cultivar 'Erika Nicole' in the following characteristics:

1. Flowers of 'Forever Young' brighter in color than flowers of 'Erika Nicole';

2. Plants of 'Forever Young are easier to propagate via vegetative cuttings than plants of the cultivar 'Erika Nicole';

3. Plants of 'Forever Young' possess healthier foliage and a better growth habit than the cultivar 'Erika Nicole'.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF ILLUSTRATIONS

The accompanying illustrations show a specimen of the new cultivar in a photographic illustration as true to color as is reasonably possible to make in an illustration of this character.

FIG. 1 illustrates a side perspective view of a typical plant of 'Forever Young';

FIG. 2 illustrates the scale of a typical flower of 'Forever Young';

FIG. 3 illustrates the typical young to mature foliage of 'Forever Young'; the abaxial and adaxial surfaces are shown at each stage; and

FIG. 4 illustrates a dissected flower of 'Forever Young', including shape and size of petals and characteristics of the reproductive structures.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE NEW VARIETY

'Forever Young' has not been observed under all possible environmental, cultural and light conditions. The following observations and descriptions are of plants grown in Fulshear, Texas, in February 2003, under polypropylene shadecloth providing a 30 percent light reduction, and under conditions which closely approximate commercial production. Plants described were approximately one year old and in a #3 nursery container. In this description, color references are to the *Royal Horticultural Society Colour Chart* (2000) and terminology used in the color descriptions herein refers to plate numbers in this color chart. Phenotypic expression may vary with light intensity, cultural and environmental conditions.

CLASSIFICATION:

Botanical:	*Hibiscus rosa-sinensis* L. 'Forever Young'
Parentage	
Female or Seed Parent:	*Hibiscus rosa-sinensis* 'Miss Liberty' (not patented)
Male or Pollen Parent:	*Hibiscus rosa-sinensis* 'Jazz' (not patented)
Propagation:	By stem cuttings
Time to initiate rooting:	Approximately 14 to 21 days at 21-24 C
Time to develop roots:	Approximately 42 to 56 days at 21-24 C
Root description:	Fine to medium; fibrous; freely branching

PLANT

Size	
Height:	Approximately 51 cm from soil level to top of flowers
Diameter/Spread:	Approximately 60 cm
Form and Growth Habit:	Perennial, evergreen shrub; mostly upright and somewhat spreading.
Branching:	Freely branching; approximately 4 to 8 lateral branches develop after pinching
Lateral Branches:	Approximately 20 cm long and 5 mm in diameter
Internode Length:	Approximately 4 cm

LEAF

Shape:	Ovate
Apex:	Acute
Base:	Cordate
Leaf size:	Approximately 12 cm long and 12 cm wide
Arrangement:	Alternate, single; symmetrical
Margin:	Crenate
Aspect:	Undulate
Texture/Substance:	Glabrous, shiny
Coloration	
Young Foliage	
Upper side:	Near Yellow-Green Group 146A
Under side:	Near Yellow-Green Group 146B
Mature Foliage	
Upper side:	Near Green Group 147A
Under side:	Near Green Group 147B
Petioles	
Size:	Approximately 3 cm long, 3 mm across
Coloration:	Near Yellow-Green Group 146A
Texture:	Smooth
Hardiness:	USDA Zone 10 (30°F to 40°F)
Pests/Diseases:	Resistance to known Hibiscus diseases had not been observed on plants grown under conditions approximating commercial practices.

INFLORESENCE

Bloom Period	Typically year-round under subtropical and tropical conditions

Flower Arrangement:	Arranged singly at terminal leaf axils; free-flowering with 3 to 4 flower buds and/or open flowers per terminal apex; flowers face upright and slightly outward.
Flower Appearance:	Fuchsia-pink petals with a red eye and white veins radiating from the center; flowers are open for about two days before closing; flowers persistent.
Flower Diameter:	Approximately 16 cm
Buds (just prior to showing color)	
Rate of Opening:	Approximately 1 or 2 days, depending on temperature
Shape:	Elliptic
Length:	Approximately 3 cm
Diameter:	Approximately 1.5 cm
Color:	Near Yellow-Green Group 146B
Fragrance:	None noted
Petals	
Number/Arrangement:	Corolla consists of 5 overlapping petals
Shape:	Spatulate with rounded apex
Size:	Approximately 8.5 cm long and 8.5 cm wide
Margin:	Entire, but ruffled
Texture:	Smooth
Color	
Upper Surface:	The "eye" or throat starts near Red Group 46A and transitions outward to near Red Group 55A, 55B and 55C. Veining is near White Group N155A.
Lower Surface:	The lower two-thirds of the petal is near White Group N155C, with the edges darkening to near Red Group 55B and 55C.

Sepals	
Number/Arrangement:	5 sepals fused into a star-shaped calyx
Shape:	Linear with acuminate apices
Margin:	Entire
Color:	Near Yellow-Green Group 146A
Peduncles	
Length:	Approximately 6 cm
Diameter:	Approximately 2 mm
Angle:	Upright to about 45 degrees
Strength:	Strong, flexible
Color:	Near Yellow-Green Group 144A

REPRODUCTIVE ORGANS

Androecium	
Stamens:	Numerous; approximately 50
Stamen Length:	Approximately 5 mm
Filament Color:	Near Red Group 56B
Anther Size:	Approximately 2 mm
Pollen Amount:	Abundant
Pollen Color:	Yellow-Orange Group 15B
Gynoecium	
Pistil Length:	Approximately 6.5 cm
Stigma Appearance:	5, rounded
Stigma Diameter:	Approximately 2 mm
Stigma Color:	Near Orange-Red Group 33A
Style Color:	Lower third near Red Group 46A; mid-third near Red Group 48C; upper third near Red Group 49C.
Seed Production:	Seed production has not been observed